1 Interview Summaries

1.1 Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC)

Interview Type	Personal, Council of Governments
Interview Location	EMDC, Bangor
Interview Date	October 17, 2001
Summary Date	October 30, 2001
Interviewer	Thomas Burns agismap1@maine.rr.com
Interviewed:	John Holden, Senior Development Specialist Connie Marin, Project Planner Dean Bennett, Director of Planning, Penobscot Valley COG Michele Gagnon, Community Development Specialist Staff Size (approx) 45
Budget (approx)	n/a
URL:	http://www.emdc.org

1.1.1 Agency Overview

EMCD is primarily an Ecocomic Development agency. However, they also serve as an umbrella organization composed of Planning and Transportation Agencies. Most staff wear two hats and have two business cards. For instance, Dean Bennett is Director of Planning for the Penobscot Valley Council of Governments and is at the same time, Director of the Washington County Regional Planning Commission but his office is located at EMDC. Similarly, Michele Gagnon is a Community Development Specialist for EMDC while also the Executive Director of the Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission. Everyone seems comfortable negotiating these overlapping responsibilities.

EMDC has successfully coalesced smaller, non-viable planning agencies and ensured their survival. Another aspect of EMDC is its relationship to BACTS, Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System. BACTS has its own separate Board but evidently they share resources and staff with EMDC on occasion. While BACTS was not explicitly interviewed for this project it should be noted that have in-house expertise with GIS particularly using the TINIS database from MeDOT and in its use of 2000 Census data.

1.1.2 GIS Initiatives

1.1.2.1 Overview of GIS Utilization

GIS activity is tenuous. They were heavily dependent upon the expertise of a UMaine intern who has since graduated, and left the area. The James W. Sewall Company has a short-term contract to maintain a series of ArcView APRs (project files) that serve as applications for GIS data layer searches by general staff. Two EMDC staff have more experience than most. However, even they have difficulty with basic GIS Analyst-type functions such as: projection of data and understanding of earth coordinate systems. At present, spatial or attribute editing is beyond their in-house capability.

EMDC currently uses internal GIS for:

- Map-making for Comprehensive Planning.

- Ad-hoc site maps for Development

1.1.2.2 GIS Operating Environment and Infrastructure

EMDC currently maintains:

- ESRI ArcView 3.2: (3) seats
- UNIX servers/data shared on network
- Prexar is their Internet Service Provider and provides DSL based Internet access
- Their internal network is 100 BaseT
- Novell runs the file-and-print server
- Citrix is used for the web-based Virtual Business Center Application
- Widnows 2000 runs on home-made servers (Cindy Meservey, SysAdmin. built them).
- EMDC has a full-time Network System Administrator who is studying for her MS Systems Engineer certification. EMDC currently uses UNIX servers. Their network administrator is supported by Workgroup Technologies from Westbrook, Maine.

1.1.2.3 GIS Data Resources and Requirements

1.1.2.3.1 Spatial Data

In-house available datasets include the most commonly accessed OGIS data offerings.

Existing data sets include:
Primarily USGS and other small scale data available on the OGIS web site.

Basemap features: Roads, political boundaries, hydrological features, etc.

Analysis layers, including:
Natural Resource Information obtained from Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

Currently unavailable but desired data sets include:
Parcel Composites from member communities.

1.1.2.3.2 Attribute Data

EMDC primarily uses the data as thematic overlays in mapmaking and does little with attribute data either in combination with other data, through original data gathering or through mapping of legacy data.

1.1.2.3.3 Data Issues

It is worth noting that there is little or no experience with either raster data in the form of landuse/landcover classified datasets or with orthophotography. There are also experience and expertise gaps in the area of attribute data handling.

1.1.2.4 GIS Applications and Application Requirements

EMDC tries to bring groups together for Economic Development. Although they have a notion about how to use GIS and have had some success in the past or the perception of success, they are also exploring a proposal by the Sewall Company to 'warehouse' their data and use ArcIMS as the outreach application platform. John Holden leverages NSDI and FGDC grants currently for his GIS program. Their data needs are driven primarily by Comprehensive Planning efforts and business siting needs. However, there did not seem to be any current use of GIS in any active way to help businesses relocate to Eastern Maine.

Planned future GIS activity and applications:
EMDC seeks to replace the intern who left upon graduation. John Holden, who has some experience with Visual Basic and early versions of ArcInfo, is keen to develop in-house expertise. He understands the various skillsets required for a full-blown GIS capability. As mentioned, outsourcing certain aspects of GIS data and applications via ArcIMS has been discussed.

1.1.3 Other Relevant Issues

Notwithstanding EMDC's limited GIS skills, they do have an appreciation and an awareness of its potential. Additionally, they have several towns in their service area, i.e. Bangor and Brewer, who have embarked upon municipal GIS programs. These facts, combined with the presence of the University, (which is not seen however, as directly supporting their GIS activities) and the James Sewall Company's extensive influence in the area, create the potential for an advance in GIS-related activities in the near-term. Finally, the EMCD does appear to have critical mass in terms of size, funding, mission, stable management and adequate computing infrastructure to foster the growth of a broader GIS presence.

1.1.4 Major Benefits and Cost Justification

EMDC operates as a public consulting firm for the member communities who are charged nominal amounts for certain projects, some services are free with membership and other projects are competitively priced in the marketplace. EMDC therefore weighs its ability to charge for services related to GIS against creating more robust GIS capability. This calculus is somewhat corrupted by their ability to seek grants from other governmental agencies who wish to create local GIS capacity as part of their own programmatic efforts (i.e. FGDC grants).

Currently, EMDC uses GIS for two products: Comprehensive planning and E911. Both projects are, in reality, hardcopy efforts. There is no cost justification for rapid expansion of their GIS since they are now able to meet the needs without the use of GIS. Growth Management does not require Future Land Use Plans in digital format for instance, and E911 maps are delivered from OGIS in hardcopy form to be proofed.

EMDC's client base cannot presently discriminate between various levels of GIS services. For now, the semblance of GIS services or possessing the vocabulary to discuss

GIS in general has sufficed. Overall, the cost of GIS has balanced the benefit. It is a static relationship that will only be altered by increased consumer demand.